

Number one for English language teachers



## Author of the month: Daniel Barber

Daniel Barber, author of our First Steps into series, tells us about teaching in a windowless basement, the experience of talking to a webcam and gives his advice on becoming an ELT author.



### Tell us a little about yourself

I'm a teacher, teacher trainer and materials writer from the London area. I've lived most of my adult life abroad, in France, Mexico and Spain. I didn't mean to become a teacher – it was a side effect of wanting to travel. But I enjoyed my first job in Mexico so much that I decided to carry on.

I taught adults in Mexico and the UK, then moved into management and training in Barcelona. When I came to the south of Spain, where I still live, I started teaching children and teenagers. I realised that all these years I had only been aware of one side of ELT and that a much larger world of teaching existed with young learners. In the last four years I've been focussing on writing and have had to stop teaching – it's hard to square teaching timetables with writing – but I hope it won't be long before I'm back in the classroom. I still think of myself as a teacher.

**How would you describe yourself in five words?**

sociable, curious, sceptical, easily distracted

**How did you start your writing career?**

I've been very lucky to know established writers who gave me a leg up when I needed it. I like to think I'm still in the business because I'm reasonably good at the job.

**Where's the most interesting place you've taught?**

I taught in a poor secondary school in Mexico with classes of 40 students. I taught for a few weeks in a business that makes car interiors where I had to teach people how to describe the plastic moulds around steering wheels. I worked in a windowless basement for three years. I taught at the Swan school in Oxford one summer, an ELT teacher's dream of a place. I taught briefly in a convent. Most strangely, I often do development workshops online these days, and of all the weird teaching environments, the experience of talking to a webcam is probably the weirdest.

**What's your proudest teaching moment?**

Teaching my daughter to ride her bike.

**What's your most embarrassing teaching moment?**

Not telling.

**What's your favourite joke?**

ATOM 1: I just lost an electron.

ATOM 2: Are you sure?

ATOM 1: I'm positive.

(my favourite clean joke)

**What are your tips for becoming an ELT author?**

There are lots of places looking for ELT content, where you can gain experience, develop your CV and get your name out there. Offer articles to industry magazines and newsletters, submit ideas to websites like Onestopenglish, or self-publish by starting a blog or website or writing an e-book.

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